

# Admissions Policy

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The Unicorn School is a co-educational, independent, specialist school for pupils aged 7 to 16 who have Specific Learning Difficulties: dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia, often with Speech, Language & Communication Needs as secondary needs.

The School is licenced by the Department for Education for up to 120 pupils. Pupils can join the School at any time of the year. Applications will be considered for admission to the School on the basis of the School's Admissions Policy and in accordance with the School's Equal Opportunities policy.

Deciding on the right school for your child is very important, and we believe that a personal visit is invaluable. We very much hope that you and your child will visit The Unicorn School. We usually hold a number of open events, which give a general introduction to the School. Details are published on our website. We are also very happy to welcome prospective parents and their children at other times. Please contact the School's registrar, Elizabeth Carter Shaw on 01235 530222 or email [registrar@unicornoxford.co.uk](mailto:registrar@unicornoxford.co.uk) to arrange a visit.

If it is not possible to hold open events or arrange school visits because of circumstances beyond the School's control, then the School publishes on its website the alternative arrangements in place.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that children applying for a place at the school are assessed fully and fairly, and that, given all the information available to the School, the School would be likely to be able to meet their educational needs.

## **Equal Treatment**

The Unicorn School's aim is to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. A number of bursaries are offered in order to make it possible for as many as possible who meet the School's

admission criteria to attend the School. **Please see our Bursaries Policy which can be found on our website.**

The Unicorn School is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of a candidate's sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or social background.

### **Special Educational Needs**

The Unicorn School does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. The School welcomes pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require and cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. We aim to ensure that all our pupils are provided with a safe and inclusive environment in which to learn.

Our policy is to apply our admission criteria to all potential pupils. We require parents of children with special educational needs or physical or mental disabilities to discuss their child's needs with the School before they come for an assessment so that we can make adequate provision for them. Parents should provide with the Registration Form a copy of an educational psychologist's report or a medical report if they have one. This is so that the School can assess their child's needs and consult with parents about the adjustments which can reasonably be made and so that the School can ensure, for example, that their child will be able to access the education offered and that we are able to ensure their health and safety, and the health and safety of others.

Where a prospective pupil is disabled, the School will discuss with parents (and their child's medical advisers, if appropriate) the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the child if they become a pupil at the School, to ensure that the prospective pupil is not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a pupil who is not disadvantaged because of a disability.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which we are not able to offer a place for reasons relating to a child's disability. For example, if, despite reasonable adjustments, we feel that a prospective pupil is not going to be able to access the

education offered, or that their health and safety or those of other pupils or staff may be put at risk, we may not be able to offer a place at the School.

Sometimes, the situation of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs changes between an offer of a place being made and the pupil starting at the School. The School requires parents to be pro-active in updating the School as to any significant changes which mean that the information provided during the application process is out of date or incomplete. In the vast majority of cases, this will not affect a pupil's place at the School. However, the School may, in exceptional circumstances, need to reconsider the offer of a place if the School is no longer able to meet the child's needs. It is in the pupil's interests that any such decision is made as early as possible to avoid any disruption to their education, so parents are urged to be forthcoming in their communications with the School about any change to their child's circumstances.

## **The Entry Procedure**

### **1. School visit and Educational Reports**

When we receive an admissions enquiry, we will ask for full disclosure of any relevant reports on the child such as Educational Psychologist's report, Dyslexia report, Occupational Therapist's report, Education and Health Care Plan and school reports.

We will review these reports in to assess whether the child's primary need appears to be a specific learning difficulty that we are likely to have the expertise to meet. We may also ask for permission to visit or contact the child's school, or other people involved with the child's education.

If, at this stage, we have grounds to believe that we would be able to meet the child's needs, we would invite parents to visit the school, if they have not done so already.

If, at this stage, we have grounds to believe that we would be unable to meet the child's needs, we will discuss with applicants why we are unable to take the application further at this time.

## **2. Pupil's Assessment Visit**

The next stage of our admissions process is to invite the child to spend a trial day at The Unicorn School. A non-refundable fee will be charged for this and must be paid before the assessment.

The School's specialist teachers will assess the child's educational needs. This will take place individually, as well as in a classroom and social environment, with reference to any Educational Reports supplied.

Following the child's visit, we may make an offer for an immediate start, for an agreed future start date (which may be subject to availability), or a place on our waiting list. Sometimes we may request further time or information to inform our decision. Very occasionally, and in agreement with applicants, we may offer a trial period of admission for a fixed term. If we do not believe that we are the appropriate setting for the child, we will be unable to offer a place.

Following the assessment, the School will provide applicants with the results of any formal testing carried out during the child's visit.

## **3. Acceptance of a Place**

The Unicorn School operates a strictly first come first served basis, and a waiting list for full year groups. Any offer made must be accepted and a refundable deposit and non-refundable enrolment fee paid within 14 days, after which time the place will be made available to other children.

## **4. Appeal Procedure**

If an applicant believes that the child has been unfairly rejected by the School, they should write first to the Head outlining the reasons for concern. The Head, or a senior colleague nominated by him, or the Registrar will then provide an

explanation and/or reconsider the earlier decision. The Head will write to explain his final decision. Whether or not the child currently has a sibling at the School, in respect of a child who is a new applicant, the parents and School are not in a contractual relationship at this stage, so this reconsideration does not take place as part of the School's Complaints Policy.

## **BURSARIES**

The Unicorn School's bursary programme is designed to make it possible for as many as possible of those who meet the School's entry criteria to take up a place here. The School offers means-tested awards annually to entrants, where the parents have indicated on the Registration Form that they require financial support. Bursaries are means-tested in accordance with the criteria published on the School's website from time to time. Both parents are required to provide proof of their income and assets. The level of support varies according to parental need. [Before the offer of a bursary is confirmed, an external assessor appointed by the School will normally visit the family at their home].

Bursaries are always offered for 12 months at a time. The family is required to provide fresh information about its circumstances for every year that their child attends the School. Levels of support may vary with fluctuations in income or wealth.

Our bursary policy can be viewed on our website or can be obtained from the bursar.

A bursary may be withdrawn in accordance with the terms upon which such award is made or otherwise in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions.

## **Religious Beliefs**

The Unicorn School welcomes applications from prospective pupils of all faiths and of no faith.

## **School's Terms and Conditions**

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The School's Terms and Conditions will be made available to parents if they are offered a place. They are also available upon request.

## **Complaints**

The School's Complaints Procedure is on the School's website and can be sent to prospective parents on request. The School's Complaints Procedure is not available for use by prospective parents.

## **Records and Review**

Applicants' details will be held on file with due regard to data protection legislation and the School's Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy.

The School will not hold the personal data of you or your child for longer than is necessary for a lawful purpose. This will generally be no more than two years following an unsuccessful application, but reasons to retain for longer might include: if the parents express an interest in the candidate re-applying for any reason at a later date, or in the potential candidacy of another sibling; or to deal with any ongoing matters or queries arising from the application.

If the application is successful and the pupil stays in secondary education with the school it, this will generally be until the applicant is 25 years old or data will be transferred to their secondary provision.

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